



# The National Park Service Fact Sheet

Alternative Transportation Program  
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## Alternative Transportation Systems Partnerships

2003

**Partnering** with communities, businesses, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and other groups to plan, implement, and operate Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) benefits the National Park Service (NPS) and its visitors.

By partnering, NPS can:

- Generate innovative solutions.
- Coordinate work on current or future projects.
- Tap into outside expertise.
- Identify additional sources of funding.
- Meet community concerns.
- Keep projects on time and within budget.
- Pool funding and resources in order to develop projects with even greater benefits than those developed without partners.
- Participate in local and statewide transportation and land use decision-making.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION...

NPS Alternative Transportation Program:  
<http://www.nps.gov/transportation/alt>

### IMPACTS BEYOND PARK BORDERS

America's National Park Service (NPS) units are among the most popular tourist destinations in the country, with nearly 300 million visits in 2001 alone. But this very popularity, along with the fact that most visitors arrive by private vehicle, has led to a variety of transportation-related challenges, such as traffic congestion, air and noise pollution, haze, damage to natural and cultural resources, and hazardous conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists. As a result, the visitor experience is impaired.

But visitors are not the only ones affected by these problems. Park visitors often stop at shops, restaurants, hotels, and other amenities and attractions in nearby communities, leading to traffic congestion on local and regional roads. As a result, nearby communities often experience the same air and noise pollution as nearby NPS units. Any NPS transportation plan developed to address these problems may impact the quality of life of nearby communities – and, similarly, external transportation projects can affect parks and park visitors.



The National Park Service works with a variety of partners to develop ATS. As a result, these systems – including the shuttle bus system seen here opening at Zion National Park in 2000 – benefit visitors *and* local residents. (Robb Williamson, 2000)

### PARTNERING TO DEVELOP TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

Many NPS units are working with a variety of partners to develop Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) as a means to address shared problems. At nearly 100 national park units, shuttle buses, trams, ferries, and other types of alternative transportation are reducing traffic congestion while improving the visitor experience and the quality of life in surrounding communities. ATS can help meet the needs of visitors, park resources, and surrounding communities.



Partnership efforts by the Ford Motor Company through the National Park Foundation enabled restoration of Glacier National Park's famous red buses — first introduced in the 1930s, they have been modernized with clean-burning propane engines to serve a new generation of visitors.

Partnering benefits NPS units in many ways. For example, partnering can help provide an NPS unit with the staff, technical expertise, and diverse and stable financial support structure it needs to address transportation challenges. Partners can include:

- Participants in the Proud Partners program created by the National Park Foundation
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)
- Transit agencies
- Planning commissions
- State and federal transportation, environmental, and other agencies
- Local, county, and state elected officials and governments
- Social services agencies
- Environmental, recreation, and historical preservation organizations
- Area businesses and developers
- Chambers of commerce and tourism organizations
- Local citizens and landowners
- Park visitors
- Park "friends" organizations
- Colleges and universities

## PARTNERING SUCCESS STORIES



In 2002, Jim Maddy, President of the National Park Foundation, Len Bobinchock, Acadia National Park Deputy Superintendent, Ken Olson, President of the Friends of Acadia, and Chris McCormick, President & CEO of L.L. Bean, attended a ceremony celebrating L.L. Bean's grant to help support the Acadia National Park Island Explorer shuttle bus system. (Donna Just Photography)

### ACADIA NATIONAL PARK IN MAINE

Strong cooperation led to the successful development of the Acadia National Park Island Explorer shuttle bus system in the summer of 1999. To develop the system of propane-fueled buses, Acadia worked with Bar Harbor and other local towns, the Mount Desert Island League of Towns, the Friends of Acadia, Downeast Transportation, Inc., local businesses, and state and federal transportation agencies. Acadia National Park, area businesses, and local municipalities contribute funding so that visitors can ride free of charge during the Memorial Day to Labor Day season. To enhance the Island Explorer system, L.L. Bean gave the Friends of Acadia a \$1 million grant in 2002.

### MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK IN WASHINGTON

Mount Rainier National Park has implemented alternative transportation solutions that rely on strong relationships with many different partners — concessionaires, transportation providers, local residents and business owners, local governments and tribal councils, non-profit organizations, the Washington Department of Transportation, the Washington Tourism Department, and the U.S. Forest Service. Design charrettes and technical planning sessions reached out to local communities to consider different transportation options, the Forest Service's regional office identified additional partners, and all partners were informed as to available funding options. Three operators now provide transportation services between the park and nearby towns.



Mount Rainier National Park has a long history of alternative-transportation partnerships, as shown in this picture from the early 1900s.



Lowell National Historical Park has hosted many one-on-one meetings with local and state legislators to discuss the possibility of expanding its historic trolley service.

### LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK IN MASSACHUSETTS

At Lowell National Historical Park, canal boats and historic trolleys transport visitors to historic buildings, museums, the park visitor center, and the center of the city of Lowell. Lowell is now partnering with local residents, the city of Lowell, the Lowell Regional Transit Authority, the local Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the New England Electric Railway Company to expand the historic trolley system, including connecting the system to regional buses and the commuter rail system. In addition, the partners are looking to create a new national trolley museum. These partnerships build on the initial public-private partnership that led to the park's creation by Congress in 1978.

### ZION NATIONAL PARK IN UTAH

In 2002, Zion National Park restricted vehicle use on Zion Canyon Scenic Drive from April through October. Instead of allowing unrestricted access, visitors and local residents now use a fleet of 30 propane-powered shuttle buses to visit attractions in Zion Canyon and the local town of Springdale. Zion National Park worked closely with the community of Springdale, local businesses, Zion Natural History Association, Springdale Visitors Bureau, Utah Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, and park concessionaires to develop its ATS. To help keep communities informed and to represent park interests in transportation planning, park representatives attend monthly meetings of the Springdale Visitors Bureau. In addition, the park supports an "Ambassadors' Training" program that allows trained businesses to put a shield in their windows stating that they can answer questions about the park and provide park information.



Zion National Park involved local residents, leaders, and businesses in its ATS planning efforts from the start. (Robb Williamson, 2000)